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SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The General Assembly has created a number of programs that provide benefits and services to low-income people and families designed to encourage, support, and sustain their efforts to improve their economic status through employment, including cash assistance, food stamps, and medical assistance; and

WHEREAS, These programs are administered by either the Department of Human Services or the Department of Healthcare and Family Services; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of low-income people and families who are eligible for these benefits and services are served by both the Department of Human Services and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services; and

WHEREAS, Many eligible people and families may not access these benefits and services in a timely way because of disparate federal requirements, complex program rules, agency staffing challenges, and other administrative infrastructure issues; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that there is hereby established a Task Force on Access to Benefits and Services to thoroughly review and analyze policies and procedures concerning applications and determinations of eligibility for cash assistance, food stamps, and medical assistance provided under the Illinois Public Aid Code and the Children's Health Insurance Program Act; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Task Force shall be jointly appointed and convened by the Secretary of Human Services and the Director of Healthcare and Family Services no later than

1 October, 1, 2005, shall meet at least 4 times during each State
2 fiscal year, and may be comprised of members of existing
3 advisory bodies and other appropriate individuals; and be it
4 further

5 RESOLVED, That at a minimum, the review and analysis
6 conducted by the Task Force shall encompass (1) barriers
7 encountered by applicants, (2) requirements for face-to-face
8 interviews, (3) locations where applications may be made, (4)
9 locations where open cases may be maintained, (5) methodologies
10 for counting income, (6) requirements for documenting or
11 otherwise verifying eligibility criteria, (7) establishing the
12 earliest possible date of application, (8) coordination of
13 redeterminations of eligibility, including the frequency of
14 redeterminations, and (9) acceptable methods for submitting
15 information and required documentation whether in person or by
16 phone, facsimile, or electronic transmission; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That (i) the Task Force and the departments,
18 based on the review and analysis, shall collaboratively develop
19 recommendations for appropriate changes in law, rules, policy,
20 or process that will simplify, make uniform, or otherwise ease
21 the processes by which potentially eligible persons may apply
22 for and be found eligible for benefits and services and (ii)
23 such recommendations shall include proposed timelines and
24 priorities for implementation; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That in making recommendations, the Task Force
26 and the departments shall take into account and balance the
27 following factors: (1) the need to comply with federal law and
28 regulations to maximize federal financial participation; (2)
29 the need to minimize administrative tasks for applicants,
30 recipients, employees, medical providers, and authorized
31 agents of the departments while maintaining program integrity;
32 (3) the costs and potential savings associated with proposed
33 changes; (4) the preservation of existing benefit levels for

1 the substantial majority of recipients; and (5) the
2 appropriateness and feasibility of obtaining waivers of
3 federal law and regulations to maximize the goals of
4 simplification and uniformity without the loss of federal
5 financial participation; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That the departments shall work in good faith to
7 implement the recommendations to the extent they are
8 appropriate and feasible given available time and resources;
9 and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the departments (i) shall jointly prepare a
11 written report of the review, analysis, and recommendations of
12 the Task Force and the departments and any administrative
13 changes developed by the departments as a result of the work of
14 the Task Force, (ii) shall make a draft of the report available
15 to the Task Force for review and comment, and (iii) shall
16 prepare a final report to be submitted jointly by the
17 departments to the General Assembly and to the Governor no
18 later than January 1, 2007; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution shall be delivered
20 to the Secretary of Human Services and the Director of
21 Healthcare and Family Services.